856 731 737 854 mouthful to drink, then dip her finger into the medecine and let two or three drops fall from it on the fontanella ; then she spits on the lower part of the shell and presses it all along the sternum of the baby as far as the navel. This is said to "nurse the child, to make him grow." Should he be sick, this treatment will be repeated many times a day. If he is well and goes about with his mother, she will pour the *milombyana* into the small calabash and give him a few sups from it from time to time.

853 271 284 The child must never drink ordinary water, but only the *milombyana* decoction. It is a taboo. Should the mother travel far from home and leave behind her the *milombyana* pot, she is allowed to add some water to the calabash, but she must always leave a little of the decoction in the calabash before doing so. The mother herself is not allowed to drink the water of another country. She must only drink water from home and, if she is forced to travel, she must take a little powder from the reed each time she drinks, so that the child may become familiarised with that country (1). These laws must be kept during all the nursing period.

862 The child begins to eat *solid food* as soon as his teeth are cut, and when he is able to take it with his own hands. But some people do not like to give it to him too soon, as they say his stools become fetid. When later on he is able to go outside and to take care of himself, then he can eat any ordinary food.

853 If the mother dies during the nursing period, the little one is almost sure to follow her. The baby is fed with goat's or cow's milk, but the Natives do not know that they must add water to it ; sooner or later therefore the child dies of enteritis.

I have heard of some cases in which another woman has taken charge of the child, nursed him with her own milk and weaned him successfully ; her own child being older, she weaned him earlier than the usual time and nursed the other child in his

261 484 (1) A similar custom is observed in the case of moving from one country to another. When a Ronga comes back from Kimberley having found a wife there, both bring with them a little of the earth of the place they are leaving, and the woman must eat a little of it every day in her porridge in order to accustom herself to her new abode. This earth provides the transition between the two domiciles !

851 a grown up child (1). The expression *fuya ñwana* confirms our explanation. This custom is not a protective rite : the physician has nothing to do with it ; it is really an act by which the new-born child becomes a regular member of the community. The strict prohibition of renewed conception before this rite has been accomplished is evidently dictated by the feeling that another child must not appear before this one has been duly received into the family.

6) The weaning.

862 856 A whole year, even more, will elapse after the *boha puri* before the little one can be weaned. He will learn to speak and to walk, and it is only when his intelligence is sufficiently developed to allow him to run small errands that the date of the weaning will be fixed. When his parents can send him to the next hut to ask for snuff and see him coming back holding the tobacco, they say : "Now the time has come !"

The rite of weaning is accomplished in the following manner in Nondwane. (Mboza).

862 824 First of all, the father looks for a young *ntjopfa* tree which has only one root. The ntjopfa is an anonacea bush, which colonists sometimes call the wild custard. (Its fruit is very much like custard fruit and it is said that the true cultivated custard can be grafted on it). The root of this tree is said to have the property of making people forget. The mother cooks a pot of Kafir corn in which she has put the medicine. This

862 782 755 will help the child to forget the breast. But the great act is the *hondlola* which takes place under the direction of the physician. The mother pounds some mealies, pours water on them and adds some leaven ; in this way she makes a little light beer (buputju). She keeps a little of the bran of the pounded mealies. The doctor comes, kills a chicken and sprinkles this bran with the blood and *hahla*, viz. offers a regular sacrifice. He prays to the spirits of his own family and asks those of the child's family to

(1) This word *khuna* is also employed to designate boys who have not yet gone through the circumcision school. *Bukhuna* is the despicable state of uncircumcision. The state of a child before the ceremony of *boha puri* is another kind of bukhuna.

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862 join with them in blessing the little one. The beak of the sacrificed
782 hen, one of the claws and one of the feathers (psirungulo) will be
755 tied together round the child's neck. A mat is spread on the ground ; the child is laid on it and greased with oil and powder brought by the physician. Then he is smeared and rubbed with the bran. The particles which fall on the mat are called *timhore*. They are gathered by the mother who makes a ball of them. In the meantime the father looks for the nest of a certain kind of large ant which is common in the bush. It lives in the earth, but the opening of its hole is tolerably large. There the mother goes at sunset. She introduces the ball into the hole so that the ant will be obliged to take all the *timhore* into the nest. Then she returns home without looking behind her. It is taboo ; should she transgress this rule, she would bring back disease to her child.

This rite is the ordinary *hondlola rite* which is performed in this or in a similar way at the close of any serious disease as the conclusion of the treatment, with the view of taking away the defilement of disease. After having *hondlola*, the physician asks for the payment of his fees. For a child he will ask ten shillings or five coins of five hundred reis (1).

854 This hondlola reveals to us the true conception of the nursing period held by the Natives. For them these three first years of the child's life are a period of disease ; so many perils threaten the little one's well-being that he can hardly be considered healthy. He is during the whole time under the supervision of the physician, who takes leave of the little patient on the day of the weaning.

854 This view of infancy accounts also for some other taboos. It
789 is *yila* for instance to say of a child who is particularly fat : Wa tika, he is heavy : this would bring mishap to him. One must say : A kota ribye, he is like a stone! It is taboo also in Shiluvane to make use before a child of the word *mfene*, baboon. There is a disease which is called by that name and it would come upon him. One must say : the thing which inhabits the hills, and so on...

(1) In the Mpfumu clan the rite of weaning is somewhat different. I have published in " Les Ba-Ronga " a description of it given by Tobane. It seems that the elements of the cotton string rite and of the broken pot rite are mixed with the proper weaning rite. I think that the description of Mboza is more trustworthy.

862/603 The very day of his weaning, the child must leave the village of his parents and go to stay with his grandparents. A little mat and a few clothes have been prepared for him and the grandmother comes to take him. If he is the first-born, he must go to the parents of the mother ; the second child will be received by the parents of the father. Sometimes father and mother accompany their offspring themselves, during the night, to make the separation easier. It is a sad day for them as well as for the child! The following day the parents go again to see how the little one has stood their absence. They do not enter the village. They remain hidden in the little copse and look at their child through the branches! He must not see his mother, otherwise he would cry... A touching scene indeed!

862 Should the weaned child be obliged to stay with his parents, the mother will smear her breast with Jamaica pepper (biribiri) so that he may lose his taste for the maternal milk as quickly as possible.

862/842/753 The act of weaning is called *lumula*. It comes from the verb *luma* to bite, followed by the reversive suffix *ula* which means to take away, to undo (like *un* in undo). The mother as well as the child are said to have *lumuka* viz. to be in that state when weaning has been accomplished. This word is pronounced with a curious smile, because the act of weaning is in direct relation with the sexual life. As we have seen, sexual intercourse is absolutely prohibited before the tying of the cotton string, viz. for one year after the birth. Afterwards it is allowed, but the mother must not conceive another child before she has weaned the one she is nursing. The law is even more stringent : she must not conceive before her milk has entirely passed away (phya mabelen), after the weaning ceremony, because if she became pregnant, that would "cross the way of the weaned child" (tjemakanya ñwana), cut "his road" (tjemela), "go beforehand" (rangela) ; he would become thin, paralysed, with big holes below the shoulders. He must first be firm (tiyela), then a new pregnancy will not be able to cause him to suffer from dysentery or other ailments!

Often the parents do not observe this very hard law! If they

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862 842 see that conception has taken place before the child is weaned, they will hasten the ceremony. But they will be severely judged by the old people. Should the little one be sick, the husband will be scolded by the parents of the mother. They will say : "A djambeli ñwana," he has caused damage to the child! If a man forces his wife to transgress the law, she will run during the night to the hut of her husband's father to tell him. Actually this is a very rare occurrence. Children follow each other regularly at an interval of two and a half or three years, and seldom is the law transgressed which says : A mother must nurse her child during three "hoes," viz. three ploughing seasons.

B. CHILDHOOD

591 861 857 The infant, shiputja (Ro.) shihlangi (Dj.) is on the way to become a boy, mufana. During the first years of this period, which extends from the third to the fourteenth year, he stays with his grandparents. They do not give him much "education." He grows at Mother Nature's good pleasure. And as Nature is not always synonymous with morality, he sometimes commits bad actions. Sometimes also, fearing chastisement for a particularly wicked deed, he flees from the kraal of the grandparents and goes home, where the paternal hand will hold him a little more firmly. But the father does not bother much with these little boys and they enjoy an immense amount of liberty. These years are perhaps the happiest of their whole life. They spend their time in the following occupations : herding the goats, stealing, catching game, learning the science of the velt, playing.

1) Herding the goats.

231 Just as the Kaffir corn is the old Thonga cereal which is used alone in the rites, so the goat is the domestic animal par excellence, no doubt the first which the tribe knew and that which is always employed in the sacrifices. Goats are very common ; everybody

954 862 (see page 48.) After her birth she is carried in the skin of a gazelle (mhunti) which her mother ties round her neck and loins. When that skin has become too small, they get one of an antelope (mhala). She begins to walk ; when her mother sends her on an errand she is able to do it. She also begins to talk, and to know her father and mother. Then, when she has grown, they prepare for her a small pot of pounded and cooked mealies so that she may eat of it. After three years she is weaned and goes to stay for a time with her grandmother. After that she returns home.

857 868 "When she has learnt to walk, she is very fond of playing with the shells of the sala. She cooks in them. Then, when she has done with them, she takes small pots and cooks little dinners. She also gets a small calabash, she goes to the lake to draw water and, on coming back, she gives it to her father so that he may wash his face. Here she is now gathering small bits of wood ; she makes small bundles of them and brings them home. Later on she will make heavier bundles.

"When she has grown up more, she will take charge of the work of her mother. She will do the work. But if the mother sees that she cannot do it all, she will help her. It may however be said that the mother needs no longer to crush her mealies, 583 neither to go to the well nor to the fireplace. When she is quite a grown up girl, the suitors come. If they are accepted, they bring the purchase money. They buy her (lobola) and do all they like. If she is prolific, she will bear many children. Now and then she returns to her parents' village, then she comes back to her husband. Her children grow. They go to get water, to cut her wood, to plough her fields. She goes with them. When they are 462 grown up, they get married. If amongst them there is a son, he goes to buy his wife. Thus she looks for a mother-in-law for her son. He will then be truly a man because he has got a mother-in-law! When her children are married, the mother again begins to do all her work. She steeps her mealies, crushes them to make flour, she cuts her wood, cooks her beer ; she prepares the light beer ; she smears the floor of her hut ; this is what she does till she is quite old.

888 "When she is quite old, they feed her. Her grandchildren are

1 [The following page is quoted from an essay by a native girl at the Swiss Mission school at Lourenço Marques -- Analyst]

A woman who has lost many children, three or four, is considered as being in a special position, called *bowumba*, and there are many rules to be observed in order to deal with this "state of bereavement." Should a child be born after the death of many elder brothers, he must be carried in a *ntehe* made of a sheep's skin instead of an antelope or goat skin. (See p. 46.) To carry him in an ordinary ntehe is taboo. Should it be a boy, the mother will put girl's clothing on it, and vice-versa. The mother's breast will be smeared with a special medicine, because they are "breasts of the dead (mabele ya bafi)." The child, if it lives, will be weaned as early as possible and be taken to its grandmother. Two curious rites are also practised to protect it against bad luck. The first is the *kunga*; the second, *rangela bovumba*, seems to belong rather to the Northern clans.

The *kunga* rite which we have already met many times (see p. 124) is also performed in the case of a mother who has given birth to a new child whilst in the state of bowumba. To neglect it is a taboo. The bereaved mother keeps silent before her visitors until they have deposited their gifts at her feet and have thus "opened her mouth." Old women having no means to buy a present take a bit of grass and fix it in her hair. Then she consents to speak. She gathers all the bracelets thus obtained and puts them on the ntehe, carrying them everywhere with her.

Another rite is observed in the Northern clans. The child whose elder brothers and sisters have died is taken by the mother to the village of her own parents. There it is buried in the ash-heap up to its neck. Then somebody runs to the village, takes a handful of grains of maize and throws them on the child. Afterwards it is dug up, washed, smeared with ochre and brought home. This rite is called *rangela bowumba*, viz. to *precede* bowumba, to cut it, to treat it: the bowumba will not now come as it has been "preceded". It will be deceived, it will no longer desire the baby, as the baby has been thrown away together with all the refuse of the village on to the ash-heap. It is no longer able to eat mealies, even if it is given grains of mealies; it is dead! Let the bowumba take no notice of it! (This description of the "rangela bowumba" was given to me by an old Thonga from Spelonken. Mankhelu, my Nkuna informant, called this rite